

## Put Your Head On My Shoulder

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## Put Your Head On My Shoulder

by [The Mishamigo](#)

### Summary

Tony Stark is not okay. Nothing seems to be getting any better until one day he meets a young, selfless, boy who might just turn his whole world around.

### Notes

I'm trying to write a darker story here ☺ I don't know if it is any good, let me know if I should continue!

# One

Tony's fingertips traced the edge of his wrist, creating circles, as he tried to calm down. He hummed lightly as he tried to forget. The burn from the liquor in his throat is recent as he stared down at the screen in front of him. Pepper had left him in the lab only one hour ago yet there were already five empty bottles on his desk almost as if they were mocking him.

He knew his friends were concerned. He couldn't bring himself to care. He took another swig. The slight shake of his hand tipped the contents of his glass onto his tattered t-shirt. He shot a glance down to the liquid as it drained down to the floor. Yet, he didn't move. He sat still and frozen.

The only thing he did was work. For weeks on end he stayed locked in his lab as he worked on the latest Iron Man suit. Pepper managed to get him up at times but only because the man felt guilty over ignoring her. He'd tell her he was fine and then Fury would walk in and interrupt with the latest mission, giving him an escape. Everyone needed the Avengers but did they really need Tony Stark?

Everyday was the same until a random kid walked into his life, changing everything.

Tony was walking aimlessly down the rubbed street outside of Stark Industries with Happy trailing a few steps behind him. He'd look back now and again and would make eye contact with his head of security who was dressed in casual clothing. A tiny grin came on Tony's face, he hadn't seen the man in anything but a suit in so long.

Then, there was a sound. Tony heard a scream from around the corner and suddenly he found himself running into a nearby alley. He saw a young man, a teenager and a woman standing around with looks of tension on their faces. The teenager was stood in front of the woman with his fists raised.

"I think you should walk away, sir," The child said, glaring up at the other man. "She said no, didn't you hear her? Get out."

"This isn't your business. Get back to school." The man said as he took one step closer to the boy. The kid, however, didn't move. He stood his ground. Tony was frozen to the spot. He didn't want to draw attention to himself but he couldn't just turn around and leave.

"No." The boy stood up on his tiptoes to look tall. He had his hand resting on something in his pocket but Tony could recognise the look of hesitancy over his face. "I told you to get out."

The man laughed. "You've got spunk, kid. I told you that this isn't your business though." His hand grabbed the teen's collar but a look of confusion fell over him when the boy stood his ground. Tony almost gasped as the lanky teen threw a shot and hit it well over the tall man's face. The punch caused him to fall a few steps back, clutching his hand over where the fist met his cheek.  
"You little brat."

Peter pushed the woman to the side of him, Tony barely hearing the hushed whisper telling her to run. He heard the distinct sound of heels going in the other direction. Tony's eyes went wide as the kid turned his direction back to the man, effortlessly blocking and avoiding hits. He was able to take the man down in only a few seconds and turned to run away only to bump into Tony. Happy chose that time to catch up.

"Boss- what the hell?" Happy said, out of breath.

Tony stared down at the kid who looked up at him with wide brown eyes. His eyes glanced over to the man's body on the floor and then back to the kid.

"A-Are you going to call the p-police?" The boy stuttered, his eyes also falling back to the man. He looked terrified.

"Why would I? You were doing the right thing." Tony simply shrugged, ignoring Happy as he tried to grab his attention. "Frankly, he deserved it."

"I...I have to go." Peter ran.

"Who was that?" Happy asked.

"I have no idea." Tony mumbled, watching him run off.

Tony was sat down in his lab again one night, the familiar bottle of liquor in his hand. He was drunk, again. He felt the burn of tears in his eyes and he knew he just wanted to go to sleep but it just never came. He climbed up his stairs but collapsed down onto the floor. He wasn't found until an hour later when he heard a worried sigh from his best friend.

Rhodey's hand went onto his shoulder. "What are you doing on the floor?" He asked. The man's hand shook his shoulder and for a second Tony knew the man was panicking that he had just found him dead. When Tony's eyes blinked open and faced Rhodey's, the relief on his friend's face was evident. "Tony, buddy. Talk to me."

Tony's vision was blurry. He watched as Rhodey stared at him. "I-", He tried to speak. "R-Rhodey. You're my best friend-!" He hiccuped, trying to sit up. He gagged slightly, feeling as if he was going throw up.

"Jesus, Tony." Rhodey's eyes scanned the room and saw all the empty bottles on the man's desk. "You need to get some help." He helped his friend sit up and walked away to to and grab a bucket from the cupboard.

"Rhodey! Please- Please don't leave me here!" Tony called, putting a hand to his head. "Please! I-I hate to be o-on my own! Please!"

Rhodey rushed back. "I wasn't leaving. I'm right here." He grabbed his friend's hand. "See? Feel that. That's me. I'm right here with you."

Tony looked down at their hands and smiled. "Yeah. You always are." He hiccuped again, putting his head over the bucket. "I-I'm sorry, Rhodey. I really-really tried not to- I swear-,"

A soft hand was rubbing Tony's back as he was sick into the bucket. Rhodey's face screwed up as he watched his friend. He hadn't seen him in this state since before Afghanistan. "I know, buddy. I know you didn't. Should we get you up to bed?"

"I can't! Every time I try to sleep... every thing is just so loud! I see you and Pepper and I can never save you. I see myself dying again and again and I'm back into the black hole and-,"

"Ok, buddy." Rhodey sighed. "We'll go upstairs, okay? We need to get you out of these clothes and into some clean ones."

Rhodey helped Tony to get up, carrying him almost. He took him up the stairs of the lab and cursed when he saw Steve walking towards them. He tried to steer Tony away but Steve noticed them.

"Hey guys!" He called, not noticing the state his teammate was in. His face went from happy to see them to concerned straight away when he saw the sick and drink all over Tony.

"Cap!!!" Tony grinned, separating himself from Rhodey's grip. He stumbled as he reached his friend, giggling as the stronger man helped him up. "Aren't you nice? It makes sense now that my dad always compared me to you- he always told me that he'd never be proud of me!" He hiccuped again. "Can you guess why?"

"You're a great man, Tony." Steve said, his tone of voice cold. He always thought of Howard as a good friend but seeing the state of his son hurt that point of view. He picked the man up and glanced over at Rhodey, letting him know that he'd help him get Tony upstairs. "I mean it."

Tony woke up the morning after with a horrible headache. He opened his eyes and checked the time. It was only 5am. He got up, got dressed and went down to his lab to try and get started on another project. He was making a new suit for the vigilante he had seen in the news, Spiderman. Whoever was behind the mask was doing so in a onesie and that just wasn't right. He was two hours in when the sound of a door opening filled the room. Rhodey walked in, alongside Pepper.

"Tony. You're not doing this today." Rhodey told him.

"What?" Tony mumbled. "I need to get this done."

"No, Tony. I can't just let you waste away in this lab all day." Rhodey's voice was harsh as he tried to get through to his stubborn friend.

"I'm fine."

"I'm not letting you do this to yourself! I'm not going to let you continue to find you dead on this floor one day! You're not fine!" Rhodey snapped. "I swear to god-,"

"Okay." Tony said, telling Friday to shut down his work. He looked over at the two closest people in his life who were watching his every movement. He knew he wanted to cry and let it all out but Stark men didn't cry, his father reminded him of that. "Stop looking at me like that. I'm okay. We'll do.. something else today."

"If you're up to it then I have a scheduled talk in a high school today. I'd like for you to come along? To surprise the kids..?" Pepper smiled at Tony, looking hopeful. "You don't have to, of course, but it'll nice to spend the day with you. I miss you."

Tony bit his lip. He never really liked visiting children as they asked too many questions. Older kids were even worse, sometimes, as they were normally just rude. But the way Pepper was looking at him was breaking his heart. He nodded slowly. "Uh. Okay, sure. We'll do that. I'll go get changed." He walked away and left the other two adults in the room, alone.

"He'll be okay." Rhodey said to Pepper, putting a hand on her shoulder. He just wished he believed it too.

## Two

### Chapter Summary

Tony goes with Pepper to a nearby high school and sees a familiar face in the crowd..

### Chapter Notes

(Mentions of panic attacks)

Tony shrugged on his suit and found himself in the back of one of his cars with Pepper sat behind him. He made conversation, pretending to be as normal as he could be. Happy pulled up to the side of Midtown, a school Tony knew was all about STEM. At least the kids were smart, he thought. He watched as the headteacher realised who was standing in front of him. He looked down at the hand raised and let Pepper shake it for him.

“Mr Stark and Miss Potts.” The man said. “I was only expecting one of you.”

Tony laughed a little. “Well, I’m here.”

Tony walked through the hallways of the high school. He couldn’t remember what his school days were like, going to college at the young age of 15. Pepper chatted away to the principal, Morita, as Tony’s mind drifted away. They walked into the assembly hall and Tony almost flinched at the sound of the kid’s cheering.

“No way-,” Ned Leeds, a young boy sat in one of the stands, whispered to his best friend. His best friend’s face was unreadable yet he continued to speak. “Is that who I think it is? Is that Tony Stark?! As in Iron Man!” Ned glanced down and saw Peter’s hand shaking. “Peter?”

“Yeah, uh-“ Peter smiled almost convincingly at his friend and turned to stare at the man he bumped into only a few days before.

Pepper talked to them all for about 30 minutes, everything she said was with meaning and Peter listened to it all (for the first time). Usually the public speakers that Midtown booked had the whole class asleep by the five minute mark but everyone was attentive today. It was Pepper Potts, who wouldn’t want to listen to her talk? Tony said something small but something was wrong with the usually eccentric man, Peter could tell. They all had a chance to meet the duo but Peter couldn’t. He couldn’t look Tony in the eyes because the man might recognise him and tell someone what he saw in that alleyway. So, he slipped outside of the hall.

He sat outside of the school, his back against the bricks. He watched the clouds go past and was confused when Tony walked out of the school with his hand clasping at his heart. Peter recognised the panic in the man’s eyes. He felt the feeling of something wrong just as he saw the car coming. Tony kept walking. Peter cursed, jumping up. He grabbed Tony and pulled him in, stopping him from getting hit.

“Holy shit-,” Tony mumbled, blinking fast as he stared at the boy who saved his life. He recognised this boy but he couldn’t pinpoint from where and then it came to him. “You have a way of saving people, don’t you?”

“You, uh, recognise me?” Peter said, eyes wide. He thought the man would but hearing him say it almost felt unbelievable.

“Yeah.” Tony said, sighing. “I do, kid. You go here?” Peter nodded quickly. “How come you’re not inside? Didn’t want to meet me and Pep?”

Peter almost asked why he wasn’t inside but stopped himself when he realised that the man must have been panicking to not see the car. “Uh. Please don’t tell my teacher- I-It just got a bit crowded and I thought you would see me and tell my teachers that I- uh- beat up that man.”

“Kid.” Tony mumbled, his hand rubbing his face. “I’m not going to tell anyone. The guy deserved it, like I said before.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. Oh.” Tony chuckled a little bit. “So. You like to help people, huh? I guess I should say thank you. You saved my life.”

“I mean, uh, I guess I did? I just did what anyone else would do. You know? I-, um-,” Peter stammered, not really believing he was having a casual conversation with the Tony Stark.

“No, kid. Thank you.” Tony said. “What’s your name?”

“Peter Parker, sir,”

“I guess I should go back into the hall or Pepper is going to lose it at me. You coming?”

Peter nodded. He walked back to the hall with Tony and winced as his principal glared at him, as everyone else was sat back down. Tony noticed the look and loudly thanked the kid for ‘showing him where the bathroom was’, so the kid didn’t get in trouble. Peter nodded, running back up to his seat.

Pepper thanked the kids for their hospitality, smiling over at Tony. Tony smiled back and made eye contact with Peter in the stands. The kid quickly looked away.

Tony thought that was it, and he knew that was all he could really handle but then he found himself following a young, scared, secretary down the hallways of a small high school. Pepper was glancing at him, he knew it. She had seen him walk out of the hall. Everyone did. He blinked for a second and suddenly he was back in the moment.

The kid, who he didn’t even know, was stood in front of him. From what he could see now the kid was just a faceless figure. His mind didn’t need to remind him of what the person looked like, just of the feeling in the moment. The kid had asked something stupid. It was just childlike curiosity. It was something about space. He couldn’t quite remember the wording. All he could remember was the feeling, the panic. Before he knew it, he left the building. Before he knew it, the other kid ‘Peter’ had grabbed him and saved his life.

The panic he felt in the moment, the panic he felt now... It felt like something was clawing at his brain, the pain spreading to his body. His heart rate picked up. He blinked again.

He was stood in front of a classroom. Pepper was talking. He could see birds outside the window.

He could see his own shaking hands. He could see the kid, Peter, staring. He could touch the fabric of his suit, the paper in his left pocket, an old 10 dollar bill in his right and the back of his hand. He took a breath. What could he hear? Birds, Pepper, his breathing. The smells? The old classroom, cut grass. He could taste the aftertaste of liquor from the secret glass he had poured before they came here. He took more deep breath.

What had Pepper said? He was being moved towards kids but he had no idea what they wanted from him. He walked directly to Peter, grabbing the empty chair from next to him. He sat in front of Peter, and another kid, and waited for one of them to speak. Just say something, he begged. But, they didn't.

"What am I doing here?" He whispered in Peter's ear. "I zoned out. Give me some direction here, please."

"We're doing physics. You're just observing with Miss Potts." He whispered back.

Simple, calming, words. Tony needed that right now. The kid didn't look at him like he needed fixing, didn't look at him as if he was a piece of glass waiting to smash. It was a nice change of pace. He liked that his team cared, he liked that Pepper and Rhodey were worried that he'd be dead by next week but sometimes he just needed some normality. He needed to forget things were bad even if it was just a second.

It wasn't like Peter just changed his life by telling him a simple task but it, somehow, made Tony a bit emotional. He bit down on his tongue, gently, as he tried to stop his inner thoughts from spiralling into buying his next bottle of alcohol. He tried to focus on now, to focus on what he was doing but the sound of whispering teenagers, the whiteboard pen squeaking on the board. It was too much.

"There's a bathroom a few doors down to the right. It's a good place to calm down." Peter whispered into the man's ear. "Only if you need it, that is. I don't mean to be intrusive."

"Look at you, Peter. Saving my life my life for the second time." He got up, made the excuse and said he'd be right back.

Tony didn't think he'd find himself breaking down in a high school's bathroom that morning but that's where life sent him. He cried, his hands shaking as he tried to talk himself down from the panic. He stared at the white wall, the walls tainted by years of graffiti from the students and if he found himself grabbing his flask which was filled to the brim with scotch... nobody needed to know.

## Three

### Chapter Summary

Tony goes out for a walk...

### Chapter Notes

This one has the first mentions of rape/non con so please be careful!!

Tony was sat in his penthouse living room later that week. He was one day sober by this point and was trying hard not to grab another drink from the cupboard. The rest of his team were downstairs, extending an invite to him. He refused. He grabbed his coat and put it on, leaving the tower to try and get his mind away from everything else.

Peter Parker was curled up into a corner of a dimly lit alleyway. His breath was the only bit of heating he had as the snow slowly surrounded him. He cuddled into his blanket, the last gift May gave him, and cried. It was his first winter since everything happened and he wasn't sure how to deal with it all. He ate at a local shelter but they didn't have a place for him to sleep that night. He sighed, knowing how it was, and retreated back to the alleyway he was currently in. He gripped his backpack and closed his eyes tight. He just wished a miracle could happen.

Tony was walking down the street, the hood of his coat up. He shivered at the temperature but didn't feel much of it due to the coat he had on. He heard crying from somewhere and tried to avoid it. He checked his watch and was about to turn away, realising how late it was, when the crying just got louder and his morals froze him to the spot. He huffed. Turning around, he walked down the alleyway and saw the young kid curled up. Peter.

"Peter?" Tony asked. He stared as the kid struggled to get up, his whole body shaking. "What are you doing here?"

Peter looked up. He smiled, thinking Tony was a hallucination. "Jesus? Is th-that you?"

"What?" Tony said. He put the back of his hand on Peter's forehead and flinched back at the temperature. "Kid, you're freezing!" He took his own coat off and wrapped it around the boy. "Come on. I'm taking you to the tower before this can progress further."

"Hey! It's you- Mr Stark-," He slurred. "We've met before, haven't we? Is this your coat?" Peter asked, tugging at the material. "Take it back. I-It's cold."

"Yeah, it's cold. That's why we're going back, okay? I can handle the cold. You know why?"

Peter hummed, holding his backpack by one strap as they walked. He whimpered, shaking more. "W-Why?"

"Because I'm Iron Man."

They were a while away from the tower and Peter was getting colder and colder. Tony decided to call a suit. In only a few seconds, Peter was in Tony's arms as they flew through the city. He landed on the Avenger's floor and burst through with the boy in his arms. The sound of the doors and metal footprints alerted the team. They all rushed over and expected to see Tony drunk but widened their eyes when they noticed the boy. Tony walked past the team and took him into a spare room. He got the boy into some warm clothes and put a different, dry, blanket around his shoulders. He covered the kid's head, knowing it helped with patients suffering from hypothermia. Peter's shivering started to slow down, his body automatically curling into the blanket.

"We've got to stop meeting like this." Tony said, after Peter seemed to warm up.

"Mr Stark?" Peter mumbled. He tried to get out of the blanket and onto his feet but the man put a hand on his shoulder to stop him. He sniffled a little bit and stared at the billionaire. "Where am I?"

"You're at the Avengers tower. I found you in an alleyway close to death. What were you thinking?" He asked.

"Didn't exactly have a choice, sir."

"Oh." Tony said, realising what was going on. "You're homeless?"

Peter nodded slowly. He wiped a tear from his face. "Y-Yeah. I am. My, uh, parents died when I was four so I went to live with my Uncle and Aunt. The 3 of us went to a shop about 10 months ago and this robber shot them both. I had, uh, well- you get the image, sir. I-I've been on my own ever since."

"Shit." Tony mumbled. "I'm sorry, Peter." He looked at the boy in front of him. The boy that had been so brave to defend someone he didn't even know even after going through all of this. "You know I'll have to call social services or something.. I can't just let you stay out on the streets."

"N-No!" Peter's eyes snapped open. He pushed past Tony and got onto his feet. "No! You can't do that, please!"

"Kid.." Tony sighed. "Please sit down. You're still cold-," He tried to get the blanket back around him but he flinched back, covering his face.

"I-I-I'll do anything! I can't go back into the system-,"

Peter blinked. All he saw was black. When he opened his eyes again, he was back into his old foster parents' home. It had only been 3 months since both his Aunt and Uncle were shot in front of him and he had already been to two foster homes. The one he was staring at now was number two. Skip had been nice, at first. He cared for Peter. He did everything for him. He fed him, put him to bed, helped him with his homework (although Peter knew the knowledge more than he did) and he even read books to him at night. It weirded Peter out, a little, but the man was nice enough so he let it happen.

Then it started to get weird. Skip would start to touch him in places he didn't like. He'd tense up when the man grabbed his waist, holding him still. Skip would breathe hot air onto his neck, whispering weird words into his ear. He'd call him Einstein, a pretty boy and the best decision he ever made. Peter wanted to tell people but he didn't know what to say. Skip hadn't really done... anything.

Skip had made a huge meal one night and invited some friends over, letting Peter invite Ned.

Everything had been normal but the senses above his head were almost begging him to sprint out of the door and to never come back. But Peter didn't listen. Skip came up to him that evening and pulled him onto his lap on the sofa. Peter had squirmed, trying to get off, but Skip just slapped him across the face and told him he deserved a reward for always looking after him. He'd done so much for Peter and all he wanted was a kiss, Skip told him. It was what good boys did. Peter tried to look away but Skip forced himself upon Peter's lips. Peter thought that was the extent of it but he was wrong. He'd force Peter to kiss him goodnight every night and he hated it. He never thought it would get worse.

Peter saw himself in the bed he learnt to hate. He was reading a book, smiling to himself as he read the words. Skip came in and grinned at him. He mouthed something, something Peter couldn't hear as he watched on. Suddenly, Skip grabbed him and pushed the boy on his knees. He wanted more, a bigger reward for letting him stay in the house. Peter kept his mouth shut but Skip held his nose so he had no choice but to breathe, letting his mouth open.

He never felt the same after that. It only got even worse. Skip would do it every night. The book Peter once loved to read would be thrown onto the carpeted floor. So much so that the teenager avoided reading all together, scared that it lead Skip to do what he did. He knew that it didn't make sense but it was terrifying, the battered edge of the books reminding him of what Skip was doing.

Skip did more and more things to him but it was all just a blur to Peter as he tried to get the image out of his head.

Peter knew he was sobbing but he couldn't remember where he was. Was he in the shelter? An alleyway? He came face to face with THE Tony Stark as the real world came back to him. Tony was calling his name. When did he meet him? How did he know Peter's name? The man was mouthing things but Peter didn't know what he was trying to say. He calmed his breathing down, feeling a warm hand on his arm. He didn't hit it away. It felt safe. It almost reminded him of Ben.

He blinked again. He was in a bedroom at the Avengers tower. Tony noticed Peter looking at him so he asked the teenager to tell him 5 five things he could see, again. Peter's voice cracked as he spoke. "I-I can see a bed, some pictures, you, my legs and, uh, a window." He said.

Tony nodded. "That's it, good. Now can you name me 4 things you can touch?"

"I-I can touch, uh, the carpet. I can touch ya-your hand, and um- the bookcase and, um, my leg?"

"I'm proud of you. Keep breathing," He did some deep breathing to demonstrate to Peter what he should be doing.

"What can you hear, kid? Name me 3 things."

Peter stared, he could hear everything. "I hear y-you talking to me, I ca-can hear the sound of my own voice and, um, the wind from outside." He couldn't tell Tony that he could hear other people in the living room debating over who he was and why Tony had brought him into the room as he shouldn't be able to hear it, he could hear the heartbeat of the man in front of him (the way it had sped up throughout their conversation). He took another deep breath as his crying started to quieten down.

"Almost there, kiddo. What can you smell?"

"You. Y-You've got nice aftershave on, M-Mr Stark," He heard Tony chuckle a little which made him smile through the tears. "And, me. I smell a little. Pr-Probably need a shower."

“One more thing. What can you taste?”

Peter dug the ends of his fingernails into his leg as he tried to distract himself from his thoughts but was confused when Tony took that hand away, holding it so he wouldn’t hurt himself.

“Peter, don’t do that.” He said, his voice strict but not harsh. “Focus on me. Tell me something you can taste.”

“Tears- I-I taste my own tears, Mr Stark,” He sniffed.

Tony nodded. “Well done.” He said. “Now just focus on that breathing. Follow my pattern-,”

They sat in silence as Peter copied the adult’s breathing. He eventually stopped crying, his vision clearing up. He looked at Tony and saw a little bit of blood on his forehead. His eyes widened, realising he must of accidentally hit Tony when he first started to panic. “Oh god-,” He said. “I’m so sorry- I hit you? I’m so sorry-,”

“It’s fine, kid. It was my fault. I should’ve known not to try and hold you when you weren’t focusing on me- I deserved it. I’m sorry for mentioning.. what I did. I won’t call them, Pete. I promise.” Tony sighed, feeling guilty. “But I’m not letting you out on the streets.” He thought about what to do. He couldn’t let the kid stay with him, he was too much of a bad influence. He drank almost everyday and isolated himself to avoid everyone. He could never be a fatherly figure. However, what else could he do? He wasn’t going to toss the kid out of his tower back into the streets to freeze. He had to let the kid stay but.. maybe he’d just pass all the ‘parenting’ onto the others. Clint had kids, somehow, he’d know what to do.

“M-Mr Stark?”

“Uh. Kid, um. How do you feel about living here?”

“Here?” Peter stuttered. “Do-Do you want something in return? I, um- I can’t do much-I, but I could clean? I could get a job.. I know most places don’t take 15 year olds but,-,”

“I don’t want anything.” Tony shook his head. Peter’s resistance to going back in the system proved to Tony that something happened. From the way the kid was staring at him, he wondered if some asshole forced Peter to do everything for them. He got angry. Not at Peter but at the system itself for letting kids like him get hurt. “I’ll get Pepper to do all the legal stuff so I don’t get accused of kidnapping a minor but, uh, yeah.”

“T-Thank you.” Peter whimpered, his head falling down to the carpet. Tony stared. For the first time in a while he was reluctant to go to the alcohol shelf. He stopped himself, walking with Peter to show him around instead. He avoided the Avenger’s floor but when it came to it, Peter watched in awe as the team surrounded the duo.

“Back off,” Tony said to them all, noticing that Peter cowered a little. “You’re scaring him.”

Steve looked guilty. He stepped back at the rest of the team did but kept his eyes locked on Peter. The kid’s face looked cold, his lips almost a shade of blue. He had a similar face shape to Tony, similar eye colour and hair.. was this his secret child? “Who might this young man be?”

Peter looked at Tony. Tony remained silent, letting Peter decide if he wanted to answer the question. The teenager’s eyes fell back to Steve’s. His face reminded him of school, of his friend’s back at Midtown, and the constant PSA’s they made them watch. He was the ‘embodiment of good’, they told the kids. Be like Captain America. Peter wanted to trust him but everyone had a

bad side, didn't they? He took a deep breath, clenching his fists. "I'm Peter. Peter Parker. I, uh, I'm- who am I? I, uh, well, um-,"

"Peter's our new house guest. He's living here." Tony helped Peter answer the question. "He wants a hot chocolate and you're all blocking the way so.. asking nicely, would you all move?"

They all stepped aside, letting Tony guide the young teenager over to the kitchen. Peter was sat down on one of the bar stools, his legs not touching the ground as he got up. Tony walked behind him and wrapped the blanket around the kid. He took a mug from the cupboard and started to make the hot chocolate.

"So, uh, he's living here?" Steve asked, cautiously. Tony nodded. He didn't feel the need to elaborate. "And why is that?"

Peter stared down at the drink that was put into his hands as he listened to Steve and Tony talk. He took a sip, flinching at the burning sensation on his lips.

"I don't need explain his whole life story but he was on his own and now he's not." Tony said.  
"Now, if you'd stop staring at him like he's a zoo animal I'd really appreciate it."

"Is he yours?" Clint said, stood beside Steve as they took Tony aside. Peter, however, could still hear every word.

Tony glared at the man, a tension in his stomach building up. He wanted to yell at the archer, to tell him that he was ridiculous. He'd never be a father especially to someone who was as good as Peter was. He looked over at Peter, the kid's legs swinging back and forth from the stool, and shook his head. The action was so childlike, giving him a illusion of innocence. Peter wasn't just a kid, however. He'd been through a lot. Tony had realised this in the last minutes. "No. If you'll excuse me, I'll be back in a few minutes. Would you keep an eye on him?"

He rushed up to his penthouse, following the familiar steps down to his lab. The glass bottle fell into his hand before he knew what he was doing. He took a swig, and another and one more until the whole bottle was gone. He groaned, throwing it down onto the floor in frustration. So much so for one full day sober. He stared at the broken glass on his lab floor, not knowing what to do.

## Four

### Chapter Summary

Peter meets the Avengers, Tony's out of the lab and everything seems to be getting better..

When Peter dreamt about one day meeting the Avengers, he never thought it would be like this. He stared with wide eyes as they whole room was stuck in silence, nobody really knowing what to say. He took another sip of the hot chocolate Tony made him and waited for someone to say something.

Peter watched as the Black Widow walked around from where she was stood to face him. Her eyes went to the blanket, to his face, and then down to the mug he had in his hands. Peter gulped, feeling slightly on edge. He watched, scared, as she extended an arm out for him to shake.

"I'm Natasha."

He took the hand, offering her a slight smile. "Hello. I'm Peter."

"So. You're living with us now. That must be exciting for you, you know... living with the Avengers and all." Peter nodded quickly. Silence filled the room again. "Sorry, Peter. You'll have to excuse the awkwardness. It's not everyday Tony randomly brings a kid up to the tower so you can't blame us for the confusion."

"No, no, uh, I totally understand Miss Natasha." Peter said, smiling at the woman. "I, um, well, I met Tony a few times this past month and I uh... I guess he just found me in the alleyway and decided I needed help, you see- I, uh, I was homeless and the shelters were all full and it's so cold... but! If you don't want me to be here then that's so fine like, I don't want to impose or anything- I can leave if you want-,"

Natasha's face fell. She never wanted to make the kid feel like he didn't deserve to be with them. She noticed the slight shake of his hand as he took a sip of the drink, the way he refused to make eye contact with Steve (Peter decided his face reminded him too much of Skip), and the way his body language made him look small. She frowned as she met the kid's eyes. She could see the pain behind them. She, in that moment, understood why Tony felt the need to protect the little boy.

"You're right where you need to be." Natasha smiled, putting her hand over his.

Peter looked down at the woman's hand. Oh, it reminded him so much of his Aunt. May was the kindest woman you could ever wish to know. The way she loved Peter made him feel warm, made him feel like he deserved to be around. The last thing she ever said to him was that she'd always be in his heart, and whenever he missed her than all he had to do was look at a photo and know she would be looking down at him. As Peter begged her to stay awake, the gunman long gone, she had slowly shut her eyes and in one breath she was gone forever. Peter had sobbed, holding onto her body and just begging her to come back. The sound of his crying was so loud that he barely heard his neighbour come in, after they had heard the shot, and when the sirens of the ambulances surrounded their building he didn't realise until paramedics were pulling him away from his family. Nothing had ever been the same since that night.

He tore his mind away from the pained memory. Smiling at the superhero in front of him, he looked back to his drink. “Thank you.”

Tony came down a little bit later that evening to see Peter cuddled into the side of the sofa. The blanket Tony put around him, one that once belonged to his mother, was still around the kid’s shoulders. He looked content, the complete opposite to what he looked like the other times they had met. Tony’s mind was slightly blurry but luckily he hadn’t drunk enough for anyone to actually notice. It always took him more to actually get drunk at this point anyway.

At Peter’s side was Natasha. Tony made eye contact with her and she frowned. She didn’t know, he reminded himself. He just needed to act normal. “Think it’s time for the kid to sleep.” Tony said.

Peter’s eyes followed where the voice came from, a smile forming on the boy’s face when he noticed Tony standing there. Peter got up and followed Tony back into the bedroom he was just in. He got in the bed cautiously and waited for Tony to leave before he got back out. He got onto the floor, lying straight on the carpet. He couldn’t bring himself to sleep in the bed. It reminded him too much of Skip and he felt as if he didn’t deserve the comfort.

He laid still for two hours straight. He couldn’t sleep. He walked up to the window and stared at the snowy paths, remembering the people he met in the shelters and wondered if they were okay. He thought about the day he ran away.

Skip just wouldn’t stop. He’d touch him in public, an arm around Peter’s waist, lips on his cheek. Peter would go green and pretend he needed the toilet and throw up, anything better than the feeling of the other man. He’d cry and Skip would see it in his eyes when he’d come back. He’d just smirk, loving the feeling of upsetting the boy.

One day, Peter finally had it. He packed a bag, stuffing it underneath the bed he no longer slept on. Skip came in, giving him a kiss goodnight. Peter waited for the best moment, which he figured was early in the morning, and put his bag on his shoulders. He opened his door and found Skip on the sofa, staring at him.

“You really thought I’d let you go?” He had said.

Peter swore the man’s eyes were red in certain lighting. He was pure evil. Peter’s hands stuck to his backpack, his legs deciding not to move. He gulped. Skip walked up to him, raising an arm. Peter surprised himself, stepping forward and punching the man around the face. Skip looked shocked as he tried to hit Peter back but Peter was faster. Peter was Spiderman, after all. He was a hero. He deserved better than this life. Everyone deserved better than this. Peter kicked Skip in the knees, making him topple over. He punched and punched until his knuckles were covered in bruises and blood. Staring down at the unconscious man on the floor, Peter was numb. He grabbed some cash off the side, an apple from the fridge, and he ran.

Peter ran for hours. He had no idea where he was going but he just had to run. He couldn’t risk anything. He finally found a place to sleep in an alleyway and, since that night, he never looked back.

“Can’t sleep?” Tony said, walking in to find Peter sat on the window’s edge.

Peter shook his head. Silence. He couldn’t find the words to say. He looked at Tony and saw Ben, the man he had lost. He couldn’t do that to Tony, he couldn’t get him killed, he couldn’t-

“Stop thinking, kid.” Tony said, moving to sit next to him. “I can’t sleep either.”

Peter tilted his head. He stared at Tony's hands, hands that were covered in oil and scratches.

"I was in the lab," Tony continued.

Peter nodded. He tried to open his mouth to speak but all that came out were tears.

"You'll be okay, kid. I promise." Tony sighed. He looked out onto the same street Peter was staring at. "Pepper got the legal shit sorted. I'm officially your foster dad, or whatever. I don't control you, you can do what you want, really. Well, that's a lie. You have a curfew and everything. Follow the law and I'm sure we'll be fine."

Peter nodded, letting Tony lead the conversation. His eyes moved back to the frosted window. He wiped a tear from his cheek, using the back of the jumper he was wearing.

"Where did you go?" Peter finally whispered. "When-When you first introduced me to everyone..? I looked for you, I-I wanted, uh, I was scared, I guess,"

Tony's face fell. He moved his hand to Peter's and surprised himself when he put their fingers together. "Sorry, kid. I needed to do something upstairs."

Peter stared. "You're lying." He decided. "But that's okay. I get it. It's hard to tell people what's really going on and we've only just met. I just hope that you're okay."

"Yeah, I'm okay," Tony lied.

Tony got up from the spot at the window. He shot Peter a fake smile. "Get some sleep, Pete. You deserve it." He said, stepping out of the door. He walked up to his bedroom and watched Pepper's face as she realised he was there.

Tony said nothing. He climbed into their bed and found himself sinking into Pepper's arms. A hot tear fell. He hadn't cried in so long, he had only cried in front of Pepper once. She didn't say anything. She held him as he cried, her hand in his hair.

Peter found himself back onto the floor, sobbing into May's blanket. He just wanted to be home, home with his Uncle and Aunt but they were never coming back. He'd never see them again and it was all his fault. Skip, living alone, and everything else in between happened in the 'after'. The before had been so good. He'd been happy, carefree, excited to be alive. He'd run home from school and find himself in May's arms as Ben cooked them dinner. He loved them.

He took a photo out from his backpack and stared at the image. May's smile looked back at him. Her last words repeated in his head. "I'll always be here in your heart,... I'll always be looking down at you." As he tried to sleep, hugging the image, he wondered if he ever had a chance to be happy again.

Peter hadn't been in school for a while after Tony found him. He'd been adjusting to his new life, making friends with the Avengers. Tony had been stuck to him, making sure he was safe wherever he went. They had spent hours in the lab, creating, and Tony had been impressed by how clever the boy was.

It had been a whole week when Peter's 'burner phone' (as he called it), started ringing. He had told his school that this phone number was his 'new foster parent's' once he had ran away so that the school contacted him instead of Skip.

Tony picked up the phone, out of habit, as Peter sat in the bathroom. "Hello?" He said. "Who is this?"

“Is this Peter Parker’s guardian?” The voice said.

“Uh, yes?”

“Peter has not be in school for a while. We were just wondering if you could explain why?”

Shit, Tony thought. He had completely forgot kids had to go to school. He came up with a good lie on the spot.

“I’m so sorry,” He did his best to sound genuine. “Peter has been very ill recently, it’s been so bad that updating his school was the last thing on my mind. He should be well enough to attend soon,”

He hung up the phone and placed it down on the side. Sitting down on his desk chair, he frowned. How could forget about something as crucial as school? He was useless, he wasn’t good enough for Peter. The kid deserved better. Better than some alcoholic who couldn’t even look after himself.

“Mr Stark?” Peter was stood in the doorway. Tony’s MIT jumper was on (he had been cold in the lab and Tony had offered), the sleeves falling over his wrists. “Are you okay?”

Peter had a way of knowing Tony was upset. Every subtle frown, every look and shake of the hand, Peter knew. It was because of this, because he knew that the teenager was depending on him, that he hadn’t reached for a drink since the first night Peter moved in. Tony took a deep breath. “Fine. Everything’s fine, kiddo.”

Peter walked to his side, taking a seat next to his mentor. “Ok.” He nodded. He knew that Tony was lying but he didn’t want to overstep.

“So. How do you feel about going back to school?” Tony asked. “I’ll take you back to the one you were at before.”

“Oh crap!” Peter said. He ignored Tony’s ‘language’ comment. “I haven’t told Ned that I’m okay!” Tony’s confused face made him elaborate. “Ned’s my best friend in the whole world and he, um, well he didn’t know about my whole situation’ so he must think I’ve fallen off the edge of the world.”

Tony shook his head with a laugh. “Great stuff, Pete. He was probably so worried, go give him a call.”

“But, it-it’s lab time..,”

Peter’s childish stutter made Tony smile. He put a comforting hand on Peter’s leg. “Go, kid. I’ll be okay. You need to speak with your friend. I’d be.. well, I’d be scared if I thought you were in danger and I’ve only known you properly for a week. He’s probably worried sick-,”

Peter smiled softly. “T-Thank you Mr Stark,” He took his phone from the table and ran up to his room, running into Rhodey on the way up. He talked to Rhodey for a little bit and let him know Tony was okay in the lab (the man asked him how Tony was doing every time they talked). Getting into his room, he pressed the call icon on Ned’s number.,

Ned answered on the first ring. “Peter!” He called, Peter chuckling lightly at the excitement of his voice. “Where the hell have you been man? I haven’t even seen Spiderman out in ages! I thought you had died! It’s just been me and MJ at lunch and she’s scary!”

“Ned..,” Peter smiled. “I missed you.” His voice broke, trying not to well up. He felt so guilty that

he didn't even think to talk to Ned after his best friend did everything for him, he was the only constant Peter ever had in his life... "I-I've been moved, um, to a different foster home? It's been a stressful move so, um, I'm sorry for not updating you. I live, um, a little bit away now but my new guardian is still letting me go to Midtown. I'll probably be back tomorrow."

"Are your new parents nice?" Ned asked. He had been suspicious of Skip, he didn't know the true extent of what the man did, and Peter told him he was living with some other people after Skip (when in reality he was homeless), that didn't want people coming over.

Tony, and the rest of the team, were the best things that could've happened to him. Tony, especially. Working in the lab helped him try and forget everything, they'd sit in silence and work for a while and Tony would teach him things he didn't know. Peter knew the man was a genius but seeing him in his natural habitat was fascinating. They'd have little conversations, at first they only lasted minutes but as they got more comfortable in each other's company, the conversations got longer. After a while, they'd come out of the lab. They'd spend their evenings sat in Peter's room, playing a video game. Pepper and Rhodey would join them at times. Peter had never met anyone as good as Pepper at monopoly. Tony's smile would grow wider every day, his body language would loosen and Peter could almost see the light in his eyes returning. But, it all seemed to do a flip again when he saw Tony stressed in the lab before he left to go call Ned.

"Peter?" Ned said. "You can tell me if they're not, I- my, my parents can help you and we'll-,"

"No, Ned. It's great. I'm happy." Peter said.

"You really are?" Ned asked. Peter could hear his concern through the phone.

"I am, Ned. My guardian, his name's Tony, is like the nicest guy on the planet. A lot of other people live here too so, uh, I never feel lonely. They're all so lovely to me and it's, uh, nice."

Tony sat in his lab, staring at a wall. He sat still for so long that the automatic lights flicked off. His arm was shaking as he tried to avoid the thoughts in his head. He knew the stacks of bottles were still in his cupboard. They were just waiting to be opened, waiting to be drank until they were empty. Tony's foot tapped on the marble floor, his fingertips digging into his skin. His feet moved, took him to the cupboard, until he saw his reflection in the door. The circles under his eyes were large and his hair was ruffled. He'd looked worse before, he thought. His hand moved to the handle but he retracted it back. He couldn't, he needed to be there for Peter. He had a responsibility now. Peter needed him. He needed Peter.

Tony walked up, out of the lab, and finally took the invite to join his teammates for the evening. He poked his head through the door, his heart burning out of guilt when he saw the happy smiles of his friends. How much had he really been missing out before? The door creaked as he opened it. He felt small as everyone stopped what they were doing. Steve's eyes met his, a huge smile forming on his face.

"Is there room for one more?" Tony asked.

"Always," Steve replied, moving over to make room for Tony.

Tony took a seat and looked over at the TV. They were all playing some Mario kart, Clint was in first place. "Nothing has changed then?" Tony said, trying to get the conversation back on track. He remembered how their evenings used to be before he stopped going. He liked them, he never meant to stop going but life got the best of him. Clint would always win the games, Tony usually came second.

“Just wait till the kid gets here,” Natasha grinned up at him. “Pete absolutely destroys us all whenever he comes in.”

“Peter comes to these?” Tony said. The guilt washed through him again. He had even shut himself away from the kid, he realised. The kid needed him. What if someone hurt him? He knew nobody would but he couldn’t stop himself from thinking about it. He stopped thinking when a hand fell on his shoulder.

He looked over to see Steve staring at him with a concerned look. “You okay?”

Tony nodded. “Yeah. I’m good.” He said. For the first time in a while, he almost meant it.

When Peter finally came through the door, his face lit up when he saw Tony. Tony hadn’t noticed, at first, his face staring at the screen as he drove past Clint to get into first place. He cheered as the race came to a close. He got first place. When he looked over at Peter, he grinned. Peter came over to him, sitting on the floor by his feet.

Peter tensed as Steve put a hand on his shoulder to welcome him. He couldn’t help it, the man looked so much like Skip. He knew he was safe around him. He knew it. His senses didn’t tell him that anything was wrong. Those blue eyes, the blonde hair, it was all a little much. His body relaxed in only a few seconds but he knew Tony saw it. Tony’s hand rested on the kid’s shoulder, his eyes going back to the game. “You want a go?” He said to the teen.

Peter looked up, nodding. “Yes please.”

Tony watched. The kid was really good at the game. He even managed to lap Steve on the map. He came first place every time. However, looking at the kid’s smile and the people around him.. he really was the one who won, wasn’t he?

## Five

### Chapter Summary

Peter starts going out as Spiderman again..

If someone told Peter that he would be sat in the passenger seat of Tony Stark's car early in the morning, he would've told them to shut up on the spot. But, there he was. Peter thought Happy, the man who was introduced as Tony's head of security and 'driver', was taking him into school so to see Tony waiting for him in one his flashy cars was a surprise.

Peter immediately saw his classmates faces staring as the car pulled up to the curb. The car was expensive, it could even be more expensive then most of the homes they lived in. It definitely cost more than his Aunt and Uncle's apartment. When Peter stepped out, people's jaws dropped.

"I'll pick you up at 3, Pete. I'll text you if the plan changes." Tony told him. Peter nodded and waved goodbye as the sports car drove off.

Peter could admit, easily, that it looked suspicious. Peter hadn't been into school for over a week and had returned in an expensive car like nothing ever happened. He made eye contact with Ned. His friend's eyes were as wide as saucers.

"What was that? Everyone is staring!" Ned whispered as the two of them walked down the hallway. Peter laughed quietly at his whispering, which wasn't really whispering at all.

"Didn't I say on the phone that my new guardian was rich?" He said, remembering the end of the conversation they had. Peter never mentioned who he was actually living with, though, as he was afraid his friend would combust in shock.

"Yeah but not 'rich rich, is he like a millionaire?'" Ned asked, stopping at his locker.

"Yeah, something like that," Peter chuckled. Try billionaire, or the richest person on earth.

"Wow." Ned mumbled, getting some books out. "Prepare for the lecture MJ is going to give you about that, capitalism and that."

Peter chuckled. He'd missed this, he'd missed Ned.

"You look happier, Pete." Ned told him, the duo walking down to Peter's locker.

Peter put his locker combination in. He opened the door and got all his books out. He stared at one of his history books, Ned's words hitting something inside him. "Yeah. I am. I'm doing good."

The school day was relatively easy. He had a lot of work to catch up on but none of it was going to give him trouble. Flash made comments, he always did, but he managed to shrug them off. Tony texted him throughout lunch, letting him know Rhodey forced him out of the lab to go shopping. He had complied, telling Peter that Rhodey threatened to tell FRIDAY to lock the lab down during his and Peter's lab hours. The text made him smile, his relationship with Tony was a lot better than he thought it would ever be.

What Tony wouldn't tell him is that Rhodey didn't need to tell him anything to get out of the lab. The lab felt empty without the little teenager beside him, making comments and threatening to blow his experiment up when Tony wouldn't let him try something. As he walked through the shopping village, passing shops such as Gucci and Burberry, he started to look for presents he could get Peter.

"It's nice to see you happy," Rhodey said. "That kid has been good for you."

"I don't know what you're talking about, honey bear." Tony said, gripping onto all the shopping bags that was mostly full of coats, shirts and a suit for Peter. He picked up a new games console and games for him also, looking forward to see his reaction.

"I haven't seen you out of the lab with a smile on your face in a while." Rhodey said, completely serious. He tried to stop his friend from deflecting, knowing his words fell on deaf ears. "I missed you."

"Yeah, you too," Tony mumbled. He knew his best friend knew he was telling the truth but he just couldn't express how he was really feeling.

Peter was stood outside the school's grounds at 3, waiting for Tony. Ned was stood behind him, forcing Peter to let him meet his knew family. Peter didn't think it was a good idea at first but watching Ned's face fall made him feel bad so he instantly agreed. He shot Tony a text to ask him if his best friend could come over, Tony immediately texting back that he never had to ask. Tony pulled up exactly to the minute he said he would. Peter opened the door for Ned to climb in, his friend climbing to the opposite side. Peter climbed into his seat and shut the door.

Tony turned to face the kids. "How was your day?" He asked. He made eye contact with the kid's friend, was his name Ted? Ned's eyes grew to a size Tony didn't know was possible.

"What the hell?" He said, staring back at Peter. "Am I hallucinating? Is that Tony Stark? I-,"

"You didn't tell him?" Tony said to Peter.

"Thought it would be more amusing to watch his reaction. Also, he's a massive fan." Peter shrugged.

"Hmmm," Tony chuckled. "Nice to meet you, Ted. You staying over or are we dropping you home?"

"Whatever you'd like Mr Stark, Iron Man,- sir. I wouldn't want to impose-,"

"If you're a friend of Peter's then you're welcome anytime."

Peter gave Ned a tour of his new living arrangements, introducing him to most of the people he was living with. Watching Ned's starstruck eyes every time was like something out of a movie.

They were all sat in the living room when Steve said something, letting one of Peter's secrets to Ned slip.

"How on earth did this happen?" Ned whispered into Peter's ear.

Peter was just about to reply when Steve interrupted, hearing the whisper with his super hearing. "I remember thinking the same thing when Tony carried Peter into the tower. Peter was absolutely freezing from the street-."

Both Tony and Peter froze. Ned had no idea about Peter's living situation. Tony had tried to cut him off but it had been too late. Ned had turned to face Peter, confusion on his face. "Streets? Why were you outside?"

Peter's hands were shaking. He stared up at Tony, terrified. Tony took his hands, Peter looking away. "Look at me." He said but his voice wasn't stern, it was soft. It felt like nobody else was in the room. "It's okay, kiddo. Don't go back there, okay? You're in the Avengers tower. You're with me, bambino."

"M-Mr Stark?" Peter whispered, tears flowing down his cheeks. Tony pulled him closer. Peter closed his eyes tight as his breathing slowed.

"I'm here for you, Peter. I always will be." He whispered. He held his curls, knowing everyone was staring at them but all that mattered was the teenager in his arms.

"Peter?" Ned whispered as Tony pulled away from him, the two teens walking into the kitchen to have a private conversation.

"Are you okay?" Ned asked. Peter nodded, brushing away his tears. "I, uh, I didn't know- why didn't you tell me? I'd let you stay at mine, I swear." Ned's own eyes were welling up. "I'm so sorry Pete- I knew something was wrong and I-,"

"No, Ned," Peter shook his head. "It's not your fault. At all. I-I just didn't-I didn't feel like I deserved to be in a home." Tony tried not to listen in, the closest to the door, but he did. His heart was torn into pieces as he listened to Peter's confession. "I, um, well- you know Skip. He wasn't the greatest. I had to run, I had to get out of there."

"What did he do? I swear Pete- I knew he was dodgy- The way he looked at you. It wasn't right."

"It doesn't matter." Peter shook his head. "I don't want to say it, I've never said it out loud. Please, please don't make me-,"

"Okay, Pete." Ned sighed. "I'm sorry I wasn't there for you."

"But you were. You were the only thing I had that kept me going, Ned. Now I've got Tony.. and everyone else. I'm happy, I swear,"

It wasn't quite the truth but it was good enough for now. Things were getting better but he still couldn't sleep on a bed, which nobody had noticed. He couldn't sleep the full eight hours without some nightmare plaguing his dreams. He couldn't walk through the school hallway without flinching. Things were not good but they were definitely getting better.

He hadn't been out as Spiderman since he moved into the tower. People had started to notice. #SpidermanComeBack had even trended on twitter at one point. Peter was sat in his bedroom, wearing clothes Tony had chosen just for him. He stared down at his homemade suit in his hands, wondering if he should put it back on. People needed Spiderman. Peter needed Spiderman, really. He needed to help people to get his mind from everything.

He spent some time in the lab with Tony. It was a Saturday morning. They always spent time together in the lab on Saturday mornings. He asked Tony if he could go to Ned's for an afternoon, which the man agreed to. Tony took him there and left, not waiting for him to go inside. Peter didn't. He went into an alleyway instead and got changed into the Spiderman suit.

He smiled as he started to swing around the streets. He felt free, the wind in his face. People were cheering him from the streets as he flew past. He climbed up to a nearby building and sat there on

the roof. He took in the sights of the city as it got dark. The stars lit up the area. It was beautiful, he thought. He sat there for the most of the evening just to free his mind.

Meanwhile, Tony frowned as he waited for a text from Peter to tell him he wanted to come home. He watched the clock turn. Minutes turned into hours and nothing happened. He texted Peter. Nothing. He started to panic.

His hands shook as he paced back and forth down the lab. It was midnight. He called Ned and the boy was so excited to talk to him. The mood changed when the kid noticed how scared Tony sounded. When he heard Ned say that Peter never came in to his house, he hung up and put his head in hands.

Kneeling down on the floor, his breathing got heavy. He clutched a hand to his heart as he struggled to figure his breathing out. He didn't even notice Rhodey walk in.

His chest and head hurt. Everything did. "Peter-", He gasped out. "I don't know where he is. He-God, I need a drink."

Rhodey grabbed his friend. "No, Tony. You've done so well. Please don't. We'll find him, buddy. It'll be okay."

"P-Please-", Tony tried to reach for the bottle but he was pulled right back. He cried into his friend's stomach.

"Tony. He'll be okay." Rhodey said. "You're Tony Stark. You'll figure it out."

Peter helped a few people that evening, getting back into the groove of being a hero. After hours and hours of roaming the city in his suit, he realised he should probably get back to the tower. He walked into an alleyway, got changed and checked his phone.

Shit. He had 10 missed calls from Tony, 5 from Ned. He completely forgot that he lied about where he was. He checked the time. It was 1am. Ned had text him multiple times, asking why Tony Stark had called him to see where Peter was. His voice, apparently, had been frantic. Peter took a deep breath and pressed the call log for Tony's number.

Tony answered immediately. "Where the hell are you?!"

"S-Sorry-", Peter stuttered. "I, uh, went on a walk-,"

"A walk? Bloody hell, Peter. It's 1am! Do you know what kind of people are out at this time?! What if you got hurt?! I swear to god Pete-"

Peter wanted to tell him that he knew, he'd lived out here before they met. He'd been stabbed before as Spiderman. He could deal with it. He took a deep breath.

"Peter? Are you even still there?" Tony's breath hitched through the phone. "Jesus christ."

Peter looked down to the floor. "I-I'm really sorry, sir."

"Kiddo.. Please don't call me sir," Tony sighed. "I don't want you to be scared of me, okay? I'm sorry for shouting. I was just scared."

"O-Okay."

"I'm coming to get you. Can you tell me where you are?"

Peter told Tony where he was, standing by Ned's house. Tony stepped out of the car and stood forward to hug Peter, happy to finally see him, but the kid flinched back. Tony frowned. He dropped his arms.

"I-I-I'm sorry-," Peter stuttered out.

He looked up at Tony. He knew it was stupid to be scared of the man but the way he had shouted scared him. What if Tony snapped one day and it escalated? What if he started to hit him? He turned away from the other man and climbed into his car.

They drove back to the tower. Peter barely made eye contact with Tony, immediately walking straight into his room as soon as they got there. Tony stared at his bedroom door. He wanted to walk in, wanted to talk it through but he couldn't. He was turning into his father. He turned around, gulped, and walked straight into the lab. Rhodey wasn't around to stop him. He grabbed the bottle, got it open and chugged. He drank the whole thing. And another. And another. He drank until he couldn't feel anything.

Tony froze when the kid walked into the lab, guilt over his face. "Mr Stark? I couldn't sleep. I'm sorry for not telling you-," He stopped talking. He looked at Tony, who was struggling to stand straight. His hand was covering bottles and bottles of drink. "Mr Stark? A-Are you drunk?"

"Petey!" Tony slurred. "Oh shit. I-" He pushed all of the bottles of the table to try and hide them. The glass shattered. Hot tears burned in Tony's eyes. "Don't come closer... I-I don't wanna- don't want you to see me like this. I-I'm completely sober, Pete! Look!"

Peter frowned. "Mr Stark...I'll go get Mr Rhodey-,"

"Noooo!" Tony slurred, walking up to Peter. He stumbled over some chairs and fell onto the floor with a giggle. "M not! Mm- Not that drunk-!" He couldn't control how his arms moved around, his movements lagging from what his brain was telling him to do. "Peter? Petey? Please.. hic... please! I need.. Peter, I need- I need to tell you something."

Peter cringed at the smell of the alcohol. He looked at the man, down to the glass over the floor, and bit his lip.

"I.., Petey, I love- I realllly love you-," He nodded enthusiastically. "You are the best! I'm so sorry- so... so sorry! I tried, I really- really- tried to stop for you. You're my kid now! I swear- I'd do anything for you." Tony was grasping at the kid's hands. "I know.. kiddo, I know- I'm not good enough for you b-but I swear- I'm trying. I was soooo scared for you, buddy. I thought- " Tony's hands found Peter's and they stayed there. He stayed still, silent.

"Mr Stark...," Peter sighed. He knelt down so he was in front of his mentor and pulled him into a hug. "I love you too. You are good enough, Tony. You are the best father figure I could've asked for and I-I love living here- I know you're trying and I know it's hard but, but- we've got each other. You've helped me and I swear-I'll help you too."

Tony sighed, content. He let go of Peter and hiccuped. "Oh, shit." He tried to get back on his feet, stumbling as he tried to regain his balance. He leant again the wall, trying to get stable. "Petey- please, please- get out. I can't let you see more of me like this-, please-

"I said that I'd be here for you, Mr Stark. That doesn't stop because you're actively struggling-," Peter stood his ground, walking over to Tony.

Tony shook his head. "You, wow, you're just so-good. Peter-Peter-Peter- " He kept repeating the

kid's name. "I love you. Pepper loves you. I want- I want to adopt-,"

"Mr Stark?" Peter whispered as the man started to blink a few times. He started to close his eyes, swaying. Peter sighed. He took the man in his arms and carried him upstairs. It definitely was a sight. Peter shouldn't be able to lift a grown man, he shouldn't have the strength. He wore clothes that hid his body, his muscles that had grown overnight after the Spider bite.

He walked past the team, carrying Tony in his arms. It was an opposite of what they first saw the day Peter moved in. Rhodey followed them, jumping out of his seat immediately.

"Is he?" Rhodey asked. Peter sadly nodded. The man shook his head. "Fucksake...,"

Peter put Tony down. Tony immediately dropped to the floor, having nothing to hold onto. Peter saw some cuts over his finger from the shattered glass. Rhodey looked at Peter, telling him to go to bed. He'll sort it out, he said.

"I promised him that I'd be with him-,"

"Kid-," Rhodey shook his head. "Please. He wouldn't want you to see any of this-,"

"But- I-," Peter frowned. As Rhodey took Tony away he started to well up. "Dad-," He called, his hands shaking. Tony's eyes went wide in Rhodey's grip. He saw the hint of tears in the other man's face as the lift up to the penthouse closed.

"Peter? Are you okay?" Natasha asked, coming into the hallway.

Peter had tears falling down his face. He felt guilty. If only he hadn't gone out as Spiderman then Tony wouldn't have drank, he would still be sober and getting better. But, as always, Peter just had to ruin everything. He shook his head to Natasha and walked back into his room. He got down onto the floor and tried to sleep but nothing worked. He had only just got into Tony's life and already ruined it.

## Six

Waking up with a hangover was something that hadn't happened in a while. Tony was sat up in his bed, his face green, as he tried not to throw up all over his covers. He put two hands in his hair, biting hard on his lip, as he also tried to stop tears from falling.

A failure. That's all he was. He'd never be enough for someone like Peter Parker. Peter deserved someone like Rhodey for a father. Someone who'd put his needs in front of their own, who'd be able to stop their stray hands from picking a bottle.

"Tony?" Rhodey said from the doorway. "How are you feeling?"

Tony stayed silent. He stayed at his covers, one of his hands moving to scrunch the material.

"Peter's at school. I took him in."

Tony nodded. He knew the tears were pooling but he hadn't cried in front of his best friend since the day they first met so he wasn't going to start now. Ever since then, he'd tried his hardest to pretend like everything was okay.

"You were all he was asking about. He cares for you, Tony. Don't make him regret it. You can get better."

"Stop it." Tony said. "Stop it, Rhodey! Why the fuck are you still even here for me? I've had so many chances and I still fuck up! Peter deserves better! He shouldn't care about me!" Tony was stood up now but he was still uneasy on his feet.

Rhodey shook his head. "I love you, we all love you! You saved his life, you've saved so many people. Now grow up and save your own! Stop being so god damn stubborn and accept that people want to be here!"

Tony stared at his best friend. He broke down. The tears he had tried so hard to stop fell, the walls around his heart were breaking down. Rhodey grabbed him, hugging him in so tight hug that Tony thought he might pop.

"I-I love you too, man,"

"You're going to be okay, Tony. I'm not letting you break. I'm not letting you give up on you, or Peter, or Pepper or myself- You're too good of a man. You were doing so well, this last month proves you can do this,"

Peter texted Tony he was going to Ned's after school that day. This time he remembered to tell Ned what was happening so his friend could lie to Tony about where he was. His Spiderman suit was on as he flew through the skies, once again enjoying the feeling of being free.

He helped a cat get back to his owner. The cat was familiar, he thought. When he found the owner, the lady that took the pet in her arms was an older lady he had met so many times throughout his time as a hero. She thanked him, as usual, and was on her way.

Peter hadn't missed the mundane part of being Spiderman. He enjoyed helping people out, however small it was. Seeing people's excitement and gratefulness when he helped out was all the thanks he needed.

He swung through the streets, the skies getting dark, he stopped on a roof when he heard a cry of help. Looking down to an alleyway, he saw a man with his arm around somebody's neck, a gun in the other hand. He climbed down the wall.

"Sorry to drop in," He said.

The man, who was holding the gun, stopped. His grip faltered on the other person. He let go. Turning around, he came eye to eye with Peter. His eyes grew wide when he saw who it was.

The other person had already ran. Peter looked over, making sure they got away safely. Suddenly, he was looking into the barrel of a gun. He took a deep breath.

"You don't want to do that." Peter said, slowly.

"Why?!" The man shouted. "I've got nothing else, do I?! The person you just let run away was the person that killed my daughter. He-He was drunk driving and his car hit ours- he only got 4 years!" The man's voice was shaking, matching the movement of his arm.

Peter put his hands up. "I'm so sorry about her. I'm so sorry. But she wouldn't want you to kill in her memory. My Uncle and Aunt were shot and I tried to find the people that did it and I did. I stopped myself. I let them go. I promise you, it doesn't make you feel better."

"You don't know shit about me-,"

Peter clenched his fists as the material of the gun was pushed up against his temple. He clenched up, his back hitting the brick of the alleyway. "Please. I have a family too, a family that would be just as devastated as you were. Please don't-,"

The man's hand dropped. He stared at the Spiderman suit and dropped the gun. Peter flinched. He turned around and tried to get out of the alleyway unscathed. Then he heard the movement, the scuff on the man's trainers and then the sound of the gun loading. He went to run but he wasn't quick enough. The bullet flew towards him, lodging into his abdomen. He gasped. It felt like his whole skin was on fire. The gunman rushed in the opposite direction as he left Peter there to die. Peter's hands went over the wound. He stayed still for about a minute. He couldn't process what just happened but when he looked down at his hands, hands that were now covered in his own blood, he was terrified. His back leant against the wall. Struggling to get his phone out of his pocket, he groaned as he finally put it to his ear. Tony answered in only one ring.

"Hey, kiddo! I was beginning to worry. Want me to come pick you up?" His voice was strained. It was obvious he still felt guilty from the night before but none of that mattered right now.

Peter was silent.

"Kid?"

"Sh-Shot," Peter managed. "Help,"

"Peter? You've been shot?" Tony's voice was shaking. "Peter? Please talk to me? Kid!"

"Not at Ned's-," Peter cried. "F-Fuck- it hurts, To-Tony- please-,"

"I'm tracking your phone now. I'll be there soon Petey - please just stay strong-,"

The Iron Man suit was right around the corner. Peter's eyes went up the man, blinking. His blood was all over his hands, the hands shaking fast. He tried to stop the bleeding as Tony approached

him but the shaking hand was weak.

Tony picked him up. They were flying, Peter realised, but he couldn't hear anything the man was saying to him. Peter's eyes blinked closed. Tony had pulled the mask off his face. The cold air hit his cheeks. He tried to keep his eyes open but the pain was just so much. He closed them.

Tony rushed into his med-bay, crying and begging for help. Peter was taken from his hands and put on a stretcher. Tony's hands were shaking violently, his eyes not leaving Peter's wound. His left hand squeezed the mask the kid had on. Tony felt like he was going to be sick. Peter's blood covered his hands, both metaphorically and literally. How could he not realise that his kid was doing this underneath his watch? If Peter died, that was on him. Tony stared through the glass as his doctors tried to stabilise the teen.

Alcohol was far from his mind as he stared at the kid. Pepper and Rhodey had joined him at some point but he hadn't moved. He was too terrified. The mask in his hand was a reminder of his failure to protect the kid.

"I know what you're thinking." Pepper said, taking the mask out of his hands. She replaced the mask with her hands, locking their fingers together. "Tony." Tony didn't move his eyes away from Peter. "Tony, please look at me." His eyes blinked, his body numb, as he finally tore his eyes away from the teen to look at Pepper. Tony's eyes were red. He'd been crying since the moment Peter left his arms. "Oh, sweetheart."

Tony let more tears fall. Pepper brought him into an embrace. Tony closed his eyes and let Pepper hold him.

"He's going to be okay, Tony. He's going to be fine. He's strong." Pepper whispered into his ear.

Could he believe it? He fell out of Pepper's grip and immediately he looked back at Peter. He had an oxygen mask on, wires in his arms. He was surrounded by multiple doctors. A kid, especially someone as good as Peter, shouldn't be in this position. He should be making legos with his best friend, doing homework until late night. He should be in Tony's arms as they watched a movie until he fell asleep. Tony would pretend to be annoyed as he carried the kid to his bedroom but all that would matter is the kid is alive and breathing. And, as he reminded himself, he could never be annoyed with Peter. He loved him too much.

"I sure hope so," He whispered.

Peter woke up a few days later. Tony's head was on his legs. His eyes were closed and his breathing was slow, he must have fallen asleep. Peter could hear his heartbeat. He stared at the man for a few seconds as he sat up. He winced, putting a hand over his wound that was now bandaged up. He felt a mask around his face. He put a hand on it and tried to pull it away from him.

Tony felt something stir, waking him up. As his eyes adjusted to the light, he noticed Peter moving around. "Pete?" He murmured. He sat up in his chair and a massive smile came on his face. He took both of his hands. "Don't pull that off, kiddo."

Peter looked around at the hospital room. "Mr Stark—" He looked down at his suit that he was still in. "I'm so sorry-,"

".. It's okay, Peter." Tony sighed. He was happy that his kid was awake but a bit of him was disappointed that he didn't call him Dad like he had the night before. That, however, wasn't what they needed to talk about. "I was so scared, bambino. Why didn't you tell me? Pete, I

could've helped you. I would've made you a suit, I would've given you training. I swear I'd never be mad at you, Pete. Scared? Yeah, of course I'd be terrified that you're going out at night in spandex saving the city. But, no, I'd never ever be mad at you for being as good as you are."

"No," Peter shook his head. "I'm not scared of you, Mr Stark. I was a-ashamed."

"Ashamed?"

"I got my powers a few months before my Aunt and Uncle died. When the intruder came into our apartment... I froze. He shot them because I failed to stop him. I lost everything I had because I was w-weak. From that moment... I didn't want to tell anyone. I'm too scared that I'll hurt the people I care about. I don't want to lose you, Mr Stark. I don't want to lose any of you. I love you all."

Tony shook his head, softly. He looked at the young boy in front of him and wiped the tear that fell onto the kid's cheek. "You're not weak. You're the strongest person I know. What happened to your Aunt and Uncle was not your fault. The only person who's fault it was, was the man who pulled the trigger. You've got to believe that, bambino." The kid smiled shyly at him. Tony kissed him on his head, just near his curls. "And we're the Avengers. We can take care of ourselves, and you."

"You promise that you're not mad at me? I di-didn't want to keep it a secret from you. I was just scared..."

"I promise."

As soon as Peter had healed, Tony took him down into the lab and they both got to work on a new suit for Peter to wear. It took a while but after a few weeks of solid work, the suit was done. Peter developed his own AI, Karen, and Tony put some safety procedures into it. Karen linked up to FRIDAY and would tell him if Peter was ever in trouble. Peter tried to argue this but after he saw Tony's shaking hands as the man explained why he needed to know Peter was safe, the teenager accepted.

Spiderman was announced as an honourable Avenger only weeks later. Tony told him after his 18th (and hours of training), he could join them officially. But, for now, he was back up.

On Peter's first small mission with the team, the whole world noticed how protective Tony was over Spiderman. The Iron Man suit didn't leave his side, taking hits from multiple weapons just so the kid didn't get hurt. When Peter had been struck, only a small hit, the suit flew over with such a speed that it shocked most people. Tony had pulled Peter to a safe spot and had checked every spot of the kid, just to make sure he wasn't in danger.

When they finished the mission, Peter was scrolling through twitter to see #IronDad trending. Peter looked at some of the tweets, a small smile on his face. Pictures of Tony protecting him were everywhere. His eyes wondered over to where Tony was sat with Natasha, Tony's smile bigger than it had been in a while. He really did have the best dad in the world.

## Seven

### Chapter Notes

\*\*Mentions of Rape/Non-Con with a minor\*\*

Peter swung through the city, talking to Karen about his day in school. It had been two months since Tony found out about his alter ego, four since Peter had been living with him. Tony set a curfew for Spider-manning. He had to be back in the tower by 12am, or he had to let him know if something stopped that from happening.

It was 11.50. He knew he had to be back soon but something was in the back of his head telling him to turn around. He swung down to the floor and walked through a familiar part of the city. He looked up at his old apartment, a frown on his face.

He walked over to the graveyard his family was buried in. He stared for a few seconds, sitting down. The flowers on their graves had faltered. He felt guilty. He hadn't been to see them in ages. He told them, all of them, that he'd never forget then.

Peter blinked. The next thing he knew, a hand fell onto his shoulder. He looked up. Tony was standing there, looking down at him.

"Mr Stark?" He whispered.

"Yeah. I'm here, kiddo." Tony said. He sat down next to Peter. "Would you like to introduce me?"

Peter looked down to the grass, smiling. "This is my Aunt May and Uncle Ben," He pointed to them. "They raised me. I-I love them. I miss them so much."

"They did a great job." Tony put his hand around Peter's shoulders and brought him close. "Thank you Ben and May for raising the best kid in the world. He's brought a light into my world,"

Peter put his head on Tony's shoulder. "Sorry I missed curfew."

"It's completely fine, sweetie."

"I, just, I saw our old apartment and then I realised I haven't come here in so long. I felt so bad." Peter said.

"They would be glad to see you happy, bambino. They'd never make you feel bad for not visiting. They know that you're with them," Tony put his hand over Peter's heart. "Right here."

"I love you."

"Love you too, kiddo."

Tony took Peter home that night and Peter had crawled into his and Pepper's bed, snuggling in with both of them. For the first time in months on end, he slept without nightmares in a bed. The bed wasn't as scary as he remembered.

Peter was close to most of the Avengers but he was still frightened of Steve. Steve was one of the kindest men he knew but his blonde hair and eyes just reminded him of Skip whenever they made eye contact. Peter would freeze up and walk away as soon as he could.

Tony had let him join a mission one afternoon.

It was his third one and Peter thought he had it all sorted out. He listened to Steve's briefing and was doing what Tony told him to do. He was helping out with some civilians, escorting him out the buildings. He touched somebody's hand and a feeling of panic came over him. He looked straight down at the man and his eyes widened at who was standing in front of him. Skip. Peter's could've thrown up in his mouth. He stood still for a second.

"You going to help me or just stand there?!" Skip yelled, as the building started to collapse around them.

"Right." Peter coughed, the skin on his hand felt like it was burning at the touch. "Yes. Okay. Sorry."

"Hey you sound fam-," Skip was saying. Peter jumped out of the window with Skip attached to him in the middle of the conversation. He put the man down and immediately ran away as soon as everyone else was saved. He ran into the jet and sat there, his legs attached to his chest.

"How's civilian saving going, Pete?" Tony said into the comms.

Peter's comm was on the mask of his suit which had been ripped off his face as soon as he reached the bathroom. Peter was leant over the toilet, throwing up.

"Peter?"

Peter could still hear it. He knew he should answer but his hands were weak.

"Peter?!"

Peter dropped his right hand over to mask and fished out the comm. He coughed, waiting for the feeling of sick to fall over him, before he put it in his ear. "Sorry, Mr Stark! Was just- swinging around. Too busy to say something you know! All done so I'm heading back to the jet now!"

"Good job, kiddo!" Tony smiled.

"Yep." Peter nodded. He took it back out his ear and took a deep breath, looking down at his feet. "Oh shit." He said to himself.

Tony put Peter to bed that night but Peter didn't sleep. He asked FRIDAY if he could go outside. She let him know that she'd have to tell Tony but after moments of begging, she reluctantly decided to keep it a secret. Just once. The AI just loved Peter so much.

Peter walked outside. Skip's house was around the corner of the street he found himself on. He walked slowly, cars driving past him. The lights in his house were on. He could see a figure through the living room window. The figure was small. It definitely wasn't Skip. His heart dropped.

He walked a bit closer. It was a young boy, probably only a bit younger than he had been when he moved in with Skip. Skip walked into the room, he could see it. Peter stared at the sight. Skip walked closer and closer to the boy.

He had to stop it. Peter knocked down his door and ran in. He froze on the spot when he saw Skip

trying to take the boy's shirt off him. The boy was crying.

Skip's head whipped around and made eye contact with Peter. He didn't know it was the teenager, however. Peter's mask blocked his face.

"Get off him," Spiderman said, staring harshly at the man.

"This is all consensual." Skip said, putting his arms up. "Isn't it, darling?"

"Shut the fuck up," Peter said. "You're disgusting." He took a step forward, Skip took one back. "He's a kid! He can't consent!" Peter walked forward, trapping Skip to a wall. He put a hand around Skip's throat.

"What a-are you doing?" Skip whimpered. "I thought you were meant to be the friendly neighbourhood Spide-,"

Peter's fist hit the side of Skip's cheek. "Shut up!" He could feel tears pooling in his eyes. "Shut up!" He repeated. He could feel the young eyes on him, staring. He dropped Skip on the floor, delivering one last blow to his chest. He could kill him, easily. He could kill him and nobody would know it was him. He was Spiderman, he could get away with it. His heartbeat sped up. His hands started to shake.

Tony was sat with the rest of the Avengers when an alert came from his watch. Peter's his heartbeat was severely elevated. Tony asked where the kid was, FRIDAY saying he was in his suit (but not where he was). The billionaire connected to his suit's camera feed, not expecting much. He expected the kid had gone for a run to visit the cemetery again (or even a visit to Ned's to celebrate his success in the mission). So when he saw his kid beating up a random man, he froze. Peter's fists just kept going. Blood littered the blonde man's face.

"Tony?" Steve said. "What's going on? Are you okay?"

Tony stayed silent. He hands shook. This wasn't his Peter, this wasn't what he did. He called for a suit, tracked Peter's, and ignored the rest of the team as he flew out.

He walked into the random house and his eyes widened as he saw a young toddler crying in the hallway, the sound of fists meeting flesh filling the house. Tony was about to stop it all when he heard something.

"Is that you?" Skip said, spitting some blood out of his mouth. "Peter Parker?"

Peter froze, dropping Skip on the floor. "I-I don't-,"

Skip walked up to him. "Oh," he whistled. "Haven't you grown up since the last time I saw you? It wasn't that long ago though, was it?" He put a hand on Peter's torso. "You know... I was wondering why the 'amazing' Spiderman looked scared of me today but now I know why. Have you come back for more of me, baby?"

Tony could've thrown up in the suit. He rushed into the room and ripped the man away from Peter's trembling body. He lifted a hand up, ready to blast the man's face off. He stopped as he heard Peter's sobbing. "FRIDAY... call Fury. I need some special police officers here."

He kicked the man for good measure, hoping to make him unconscious. He turned to get Peter but noticed the boy was gone. His heartbeat picked up as he ran into the hallway. What he saw broke his heart.

"I wasn't going to let him hurt you like he did me, sweetheart. Has he ever touched you before?" Peter said, his voice breaking, as he knelt down in front of the kid.

"N-No, bu-but he was already w-weird- Mr Spiderman. I'm s-sorry,"

Tony watched as the man was pulled away by officers. He knew that SHIELD was working on some sort of memory erasing device and now they just happened to have the best test subject to use it on. The little boy was standing next to a social worker, his little backpack over his back.

Tony went to speak to Peter but the boy rushed off, swinging down the streets at a speed he had never seen before. Tony flew after him, knowing where the boy was going.

He was right. Tony landed by the graveyard, stepping out of his suit. He put a hand onto Peter's shoulder and felt like crying immediately when the kid turned to him and wrapped his arms around his shoulder. The sobbing was loud as the little boy sobbed. His shit was soaked with tears but, of course, it didn't matter one bit.

"I-I'd understand if you want me to leave-,"

"Leave?" Tony said. He put a hand on the kid's jaw and tipped his face up so they were making eye contact. "Why would you think that?"

"Y-You kno-know what he did-did to me?" Peter asked, tears streaming down his face. Tony nodded. "T-Then-then why? Why would you want me around?"

"Peter, sweetheart, I don't think any less of you. What that evil man did was NOT your fault. He is the problem, not you." Tony took a deep breath. "Is this why you don't like to sleep on the bed?"

"Yo-you noticed that?" Peter stuttered, "I'm so sorry- I didn't mean to be ungrateful-,"

"You don't need to apologise, bambino. I noticed as I came in to check on you the first few nights. I wanted to let you tell me when you felt like you could." Tony look into his kid's face and just saw pain. "Oh, kiddo. It's going to be okay. I'm here for you. Whatever you need, I'm here."

Peter stood still for a while. He looked at Tony. "Ca-Can I go to therapy?"

"Yes, of course!" Tony said. "Of course."

Peter looked down to his feet. "C-Can you do it with me? I want us to get better together, Dad. It'll also be very scary and if you're there then I-I'll feel so much better and-,"

'Dad'. The word sounded so good coming from Peter. He took Peter's hands into his. "Yes. We'll do it, kiddo. Me & you forever, huh?"

When Peter came home that night, they immediately went to bed. Peter came to Tony's bed and slept in between Pepper and Tony. It was the only way, especially after the day he had, he could sleep without having a nightmare.

They were going to be okay, Tony knew that. They had each other.

## Epilogue

After some time, both Tony and Peter were better than ever. Both suffered with a copious amount of PTSD and nightmares but with each other's help... life was getting better.

It wasn't smooth sailing always, it never would be. Tony messed up now and again, taking a bottle off the shelf every now and then. Peter would have a panic attack that would make him out of breath, to a point where he'd fall to his knees and be paralysed to the spot. But, they still had each other. No matter how many times they slipped, the other would make sure that they'd never completely fall.

Tony had never known love like the one he had with Peter. The love a father had for a child was like no other. It's a love that consumes you. It makes you over protective, cautious and sometimes it can make you cry out of frustration but, it's all worth it.

Peter was his son now, legally. Peter was his son forever now and it felt like he always had been. In a perfect world, Peter would've been his forever. Pepper was pregnant, almost full term and Tony's life had never been more perfect. He'd been sober for months, his family helping him get through it.

Peter started going to therapy. Talking to a professional really helped him to get through everything. He'd never get over it, over everything he had been through, but it was getting more tolerable day by day. The doctor he spoke to knew about his alter ego, letting Peter talk about anything he wanted to.

Tony put money into every charity for kid's like Peter that he could, knowing that Peter would want to help others with stories like his own. He also gave to charities helping people like himself; the people who struggled with addiction.

Tony told his story on television. His rebound, how his addiction consumed him, how it was still a passing thought now and again. It made him more human, more relatable to the 'little guy'. People loved it for him, wishing for his full recovery. It was helpful to talk about. Peter made sure Tony saw every positive tweet after #getbettersoonIronMan trended.

Peter went public as the new heir to Stark Industries, telling people who asked that old scars did not prohibit the want for success. If anything, the scars he had only pushed him to work harder. He was just like his father; a genius with a tragic backstory (one that was only getting better because of the other).

His school went mental with the news. Some of them even pretended like he paid off multiple news networks and Tony Stark himself to tell the world the 'news'. Fortunately, he didn't let that get to him. He knew the truth.

But when Tony rushed into the school grounds after the school called him (Peter had a panic attack during Gym), everyone knew it was real. Tony rushed into the doors, walking as a quick pace alongside the headmaster with panic evident on his face. Students walking to their class stopped to stare at the man, whispering amongst each other. Moments later, Tony walked out with Peter in his arms. Everyone could see how much they loved each other.

Peter realised in that moment, tucked into his father's arms, that his life was complete. His tears that had been falling had now dried. His heart fell back to a normal beat as soon as he felt his father's hand in his hair.

“You okay bambino?” Tony whispered, his hand falling onto Peter’s cheek, his thumb stroking the kid’s cheekbone.

“I’m okay, dad,” Peter replied, “I just felt a hand on my arm and freaked out and-,”

“Did someone hurt you?” Tony said, his voice firm. “Kid, I’ll find them and I’ll-,”

“Dad, it was an accident,” Peter smiled. “But thank you,” He added, knowing how much his dad worried about him.

“Love you,” Tony sighed. “I love you so much,”

“And I love you too,”

Tony never knew what it felt like to feel pure panic until he got a call from Peter’s school. He was sat in the middle of an important meeting with the team; he had to drop everything as soon as he saw the call come onto his screen. Nothing would ever be as important as Peter Parker-Stark.

“Thank you, kid,” Tony whispered as he tucked the kid into bed, later that night.

“What for?” Peter replied. He looked at Tony who stayed silent. “Dad?”

That word always made Tony’s heart skip a beat. “For giving me a reason to live,” Tony said, brushing a small curl out of the boy’s face. “I love you, Pete. You, Pepper and the baby are the best things I have.”

“I love you too, dad,” He said, a soft smile on his lips.

Tony walked upstairs minutes later, pouring a drink of cold water. He took a sip and looked at the framed photo on the walls. A picture of Peter and him looked back at him, both of them had big smiles on his face.

“Hey darling,” Pepper said softly, wrapping an arm around his torso. “Are you feeling okay?”

Tony took her arm and spun her around so that he was looking at her straight on. He put a hand on her stomach and kissed her on the cheek. “Yeah, I am,” He whispered, “Finally.”

And with one sentence, Tony realised that he was okay. He was finally okay and it was all because of a teenage superhero from Queens...

When his daughter was born, he didn’t Peter any less. His heart simply split, the love he felt shared between his two children. Looking over at the armchair his son was sat in, his daughter in the young boy’s arms, made him almost burst into tears in an instant. He snapped a picture on his phone, texting the photo to every friend he had on his phone. That picture, Pepper to the side of them, had everything in his life that he needed. He didn’t need to drink anymore as he didn’t need the liquor, the burn, to make him happy any more.

Morgan Stark completed his family, Peter Stark simply started it off. So Tony sat, an arm around Peter, and smiled. Finally. It felt good, the fact that he could live without feeling numb...